

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES

George Henry Horn

In the previous issue, we briefly outlined the life of John L. LeConte. The story of LeConte would not be complete without the story of George Horn. The two names are linked together in the minds of every American Coleopterist. Between the two of them, they gave us the foundations of much of our work today. There is no single group upon which they have not left their mark. It is remarkable, the close parallelism between the life pattern of LeConte and that of Horn. This parallelism is fairly consistent throughout their lives.

Dr. Horn was a native of Philadelphia. Like so many naturalists, he was born in the month of April, April 7th, 1840 to be exact. He received his secondary education in both private and public schools of Philadelphia. At the age of 13 he entered the Central High School of Philadelphia. From there he became a student at the University of Pennsylvania. Like LeConte, he studied medicine. He graduated in 1861, with the degree of Doctor of Medicine. His zoological work began while he was a medical student. His early interests were not with beetles, or even insects, but rather he studied the Coelenterates and Bryzoa. Several papers appeared on these subjects, written in collaboration with Mr. William M. Gabb. In 1860, Horn became a member of the newly formed Entomological Society of Philadelphia. It was then that he met Dr. LeConte, and there formed a friendship destined to last a lifetime and profoundly change the course of Coleopterological research.

In June, 1862, Horn went to California where he was commissioned by Governor Leland Stanford, Assistant Surgeon in the Second Cavalry, California Volunteers. On July 14, 1864, he was made surgeon of the First Infantry Regiment, California Volunteers. His Civil War service included additional commissions and finally terminated with the rank of Major in the Second Infantry Regiment, California Volunteers, on April 16, 1866. He made use of every opportunity during the war to collect and observe insects.

At the end of his war service, he returned to Philadelphia and started the practice of medicine. He was active in the work of the Entomological Society of Philadelphia, and was elected president.

During the spring and summer of 1874 he visited Europe, studying the types in London and Paris. He became acquainted with European entomologists on this visit and on others which he made in 1882 and 1888. In 1889 he was elected Professor of Entomology at the University of Pennsylvania, but never actively taught under that title. He visited California in 1893, shortly before his death. In 1895 his health failed rapidly and he died suddenly, November 24, 1897, in Philadelphia.

In many respects, Dr. Horn's work was a completion of the work started by LeConte. It was he who developed LeConte's classification, and made species revisions of many groups in which LeConte established the generic concepts. Horn's work is an example of thoroughness. LeConte was a broad student of nature, Horn narrower. Horn's descriptions are models of clarity in which essentials are emphasized, structure given first rank, and minor details mentioned as incidents. The important thing to him was the combination of characters.